

# **Montana's Reading Excellence Program**

## **Questions and Answers**

### **How much money has OPI secured?**

Montana's total Reading Excellence Act (REA) grant award is \$10,912,187. Some of these funds became available on July 1, 2001. The remaining funds become available beginning on October 1, 2001.

### **What is the source of the funds?**

The Reading Excellence Act (REA) program was authorized by Congress on October 21, 1999 (P.L. 105-277). The U.S. Department of Education has distributed funds on a competitive basis to states. This fiscal year (FY01), \$327,627,438 in grants is being distributed to 13 states.

### **How long is the grant period?**

The budget period for this REA grant is 08/03/2001 to 08/02/2004

### **For what purposes may the funds be used?**

The Local Reading Improvement (LRI) subgrants provide support to school districts to advance reform of reading instruction in participating schools. This must include, among other activities:

- improving the reading instruction practice of teachers and other instructional staff through professional development based on scientifically-based reading research,
- carrying out family literacy services (e.g., parent and child interactive activities, early childhood education, adult training, and parent education), and
- providing early literacy intervention to children experiencing reading difficulties, including kindergarten transition programs.

Key features include the requirements that the local school districts will base the project's activities on scientifically-based reading research and will enter into an agreement with experts on the particular reading approaches being implemented.

Also, the school district must form a partnership with one or more community-based organizations of demonstrated effectiveness in early childhood literacy and reading readiness, reading instruction, and reading achievement in carrying out the project's activities, or describe why such a partnership is not feasible.

The funds may be used for the following activities, all of which must be provided, although not necessarily with REA funds:

- research-based reading instruction in grades K-3,
- reading instruction to children with reading difficulties,
- high quality professional development for classroom teachers and other instructional staff,
- curriculum and supportive materials,

- tutoring and other reading support services during non-instructional time,
- training for tutors,
- kindergarten transition,
- family literacy services (parent and child interactive activities, early childhood education, adult literacy, and parenting education),
- parent training to help their children with reading,
- technical assistance,
- promotion of reading and library programs that provide access to engaging reading materials,
- coordination of local reading, library, and literacy programs and others supported by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and
- administrative costs.

## **When does the money start flowing?**

Part of the REA grant award is available now, however, a great deal of planning must take place to set up training, the application process, program evaluation, etc., to meet the grant requirements. Only 5 percent of the total grant award is allowed for the state administration of the grant. The remaining funds will be used to award local reading improvement and tutorial assistance subgrants. A pre-application phase is being planned which will include training on the reading research, application and evaluation requirements for eligible schools. Eligible schools are those elementary schools containing grades K-3 in districts with any school at any level identified for improvement. These schools, called Title I Priority Schools, are listed on the OPI website <http://www.metnet.state.mt.us>. Go to the list of Programs, scroll down to ESEA Title I, click there, then scroll down to Schools Identified for Improvement. Assessment data is reviewed as it is received and schools are added and removed in that ongoing process. The most current list will always be available here. It is anticipated that the awarding of subgrants will take place in the spring of 2002.

## **What will school districts be required to do?**

Each site is required to hire or designate a teacher to serve as the reading coach or coordinator. The reading coach will participate in trainings with the state project director during the school year and provide training back at their school site. Funding will provide opportunities for all primary teachers at each site to take course work to secure reading endorsements. Summer institutes are scheduled for all K-3 teachers, in the funded schools, which will focus on K-3 reading instruction and assessment. Reading assessments will be required for grades K-3 and sufficient funds provided to purchase these assessments and maintain the data on compatible software.

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